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Powering tomorrow's business:
Three use cases for SD WAN

The three biggest use cases driving SD WAN in 2022, the networking challenges facing IT teams and how the right partner can help.
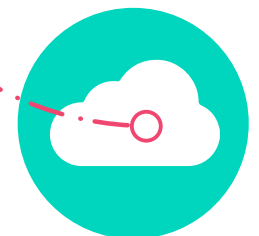
Hybrid work

Multi-cloud deployments

WAN simplification

According to Dell'Oro Group, the worldwide SD WAN market **expanded by 35%** in 2021 and achieved record revenue of more than $2 billion[1]

SD WAN has been central to the transformation of enterprise connectivity. It is well established as a great way to cut networking costs, streamline processes and make sense of the challenges of cloud deployment. In short, it's the perfect solution for rapidly evolving enterprise WAN needs.

Early SD WAN use cases included better network traffic management, provision of direct internet connectivity for branch sites, and setting up one-to-many connections for cloud-based applications. Priorities have moved on, and SD WAN technology is changing to meet new needs and deliver value in fresh ways.

With CIOs and network managers in every sector focused on connectivity requirements for the future, now is a good time to focus on three of the biggest drivers that make SD WAN the ideal solution for today and for the challenges that lie ahead.

1. https://www.delloro.com/news/pent-up-demand-fueled-sd-wan-market-to-a-record-level-in-2021/

Use case 1
Hybrid work

Conventional working patterns are being replaced with something much more fluid. The hybrid work model means that some employees work in a traditional environment, some at home, some on the road and some dividing their time between locations according to preference or suitability. Hybrid work looks to be an ongoing fixture, with consulting firm Accenture finding the pandemic has driven 58% of workers to adopt some kind of permanent hybrid working lifestyle.
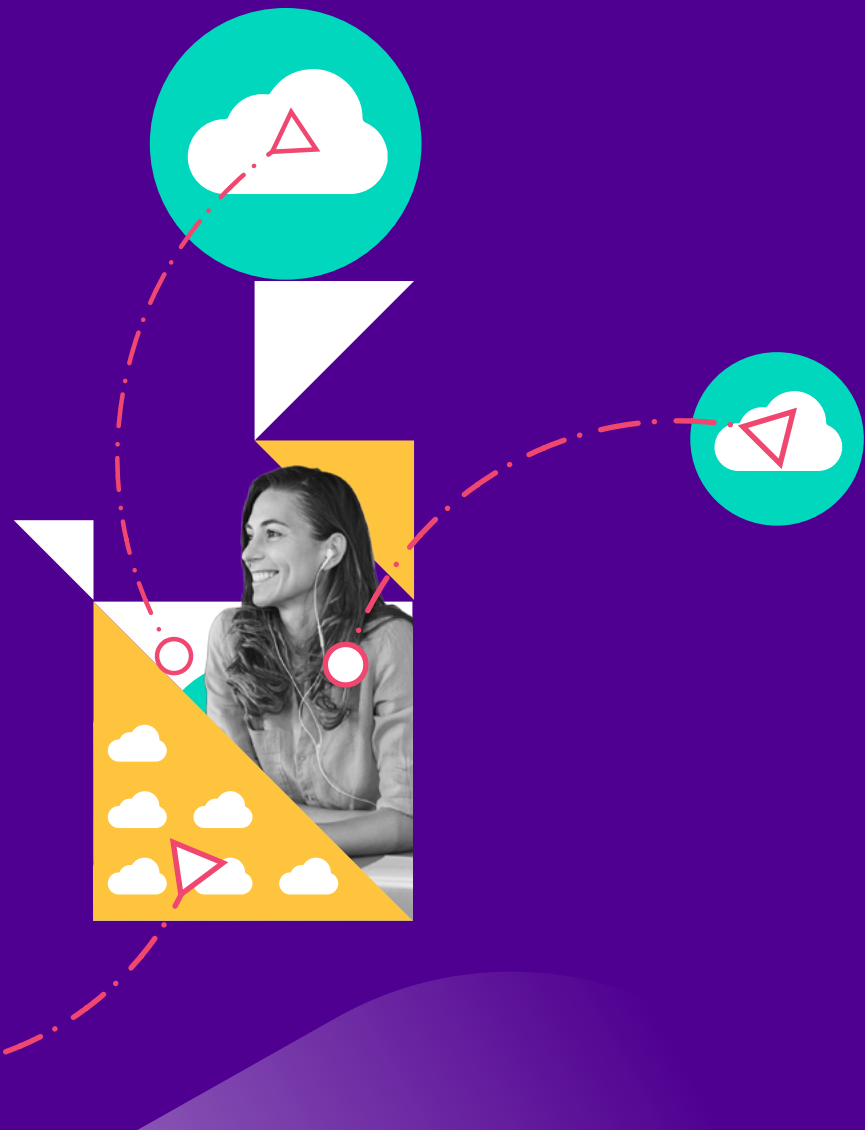
The networking challenge

Legacy WAN infrastructure was not designed for an age of hybrid workers, picking and choosing where they work and the network access method and device that best enables their productivity.

The conventional network perimeter, embracing a head office and a tightly defined number of smaller locations, no longer applies, and older technologies can't adapt to match this change. Connectivity designed for a simpler world is not a good fit with the traffic patterns of hybrid working, nor is it able to support the kind of security that hybrid work needs. Today's employees also expect consistency in their experience when they access applications and services, no matter whether they are working out of an office cubicle, in a hotel bedroom or at their kitchen table. A solution is needed that lets them access resources in a safe, logical and consistent way.

Why SD WAN is the answer

SD WAN standardises and unifies the hybrid work experience. Where traditional connectivity struggles with security and performance requirements, SD WAN is in its element. It works in tandem with MPLS and internet connectivity, delivering a consistent and universal experience regardless of location.

Because it's software-defined, SD WAN doesn't leave you reliant on specific hardware or underlying technology. It can save costs by working with existing investments and adapting to match shifting requirements. It is the perfect on-ramp to cloud platforms, leading to quicker, easier access to workloads held off-site. It also can prioritise business-critical traffic and real-time services over the most efficient route. Packet loss and latency issues that hybrid work might otherwise lead to are resolved. Security functionality can be accessed through SD WAN without deploying added equipment.

How Colt can help

Colt SD WAN allows network managers to configure single or multiple devices in real-time and provision and orchestrate services on demand. New locations can be turned up in minutes, and additional bandwidth dialled up exactly when and where it is needed. Colt's SD WAN Remote Access is designed to meet secure remote access needs as enterprises move towards a hybrid way of working. We have the partnerships and innovation to meet your work from anywhere demands.

Use case 2
Multi-cloud deployments

Enterprises are finding that no single cloud provider can meet all their diverse operational requirements. With more and more applications and functions migrating to the cloud, a multi-cloud strategy is proving to be the best and most resilient solution. By distributing cloud-based applications and resources across several public cloud platforms, the possibility of a single point of failure is eliminated, improved availability delivered and better ways to cope with life's uncertainties provided for.

The networking challenge

Conventional hub-and-spoke network arrangements, designed for a stable world of site-to-site VPN connections and on-premise corporate data centres, just don't cut it when it comes to multiple clouds. Older networking methods were not designed to facilitate direct access to cloud resources from a multitude of locations, and yesterday's ways of backhauling data make it difficult to keep that data secure once several cloud platforms are in play. Application performance suffers and bandwidth utilisation is inefficient. Then there's the sheer volume and variety of traffic that runs over modern enterprise networks. Network managers don't want to endlessly spend more money on adding fresh bandwidth as they struggle to keep multiple clouds performing.

Why SD WAN is the answer

SD WAN has emerged as the clear choice for rapidly evolving cloud network models, including multi-cloud. SD WAN works with existing leased line investments, operating alongside direct internet connections to offer the best possible connectivity for different applications and workloads. The performance degradation from the sheer volume of cloud and application workload traffic is resolved.

SD WAN is both cost-effective for the enterprise and well suited to optimise the user experience. But, of course, not all SD WAN solutions are equally capable or universal, which means every organisation evaluating SD WAN must consider all issues from functionality and management to performance and security, as well as weigh up capital expenses and operating expenses.

How Colt can help

Colt SD WAN Multi-Cloud is a feature available on Colt's award-winning SD WAN service enabling direct, reliable and secure connectivity towards multiple clouds via Colt Cloud Gateway. It utilises the SDN-optimised Colt IQ Network to provide high performance, inexpensive, and secure cloud connectivity directly into all the leading public cloud platforms while offering a single cohesive view of the enterprise network, tying together WAN sites and cloud infrastructure, all easily viewed and managed via the Colt SD WAN portal.
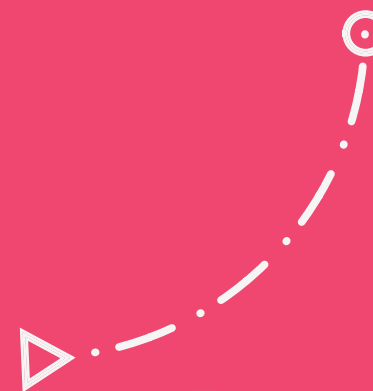
Use case 3
WAN simplification

Many organisations face the need to simplify their WAN infrastructure. Their networks have grown over time, perhaps through mergers and acquisitions, or perhaps through expansion into new geographies in search of fresh growth. The result is an incredibly complex picture, featuring lots of legacy elements and the solutions of multiple vendors patched on top of each other.

Network managers have a battle on their hands to control all of that, as well as maintain network security. The ongoing migration of essential functions into the cloud has made the job tougher still.
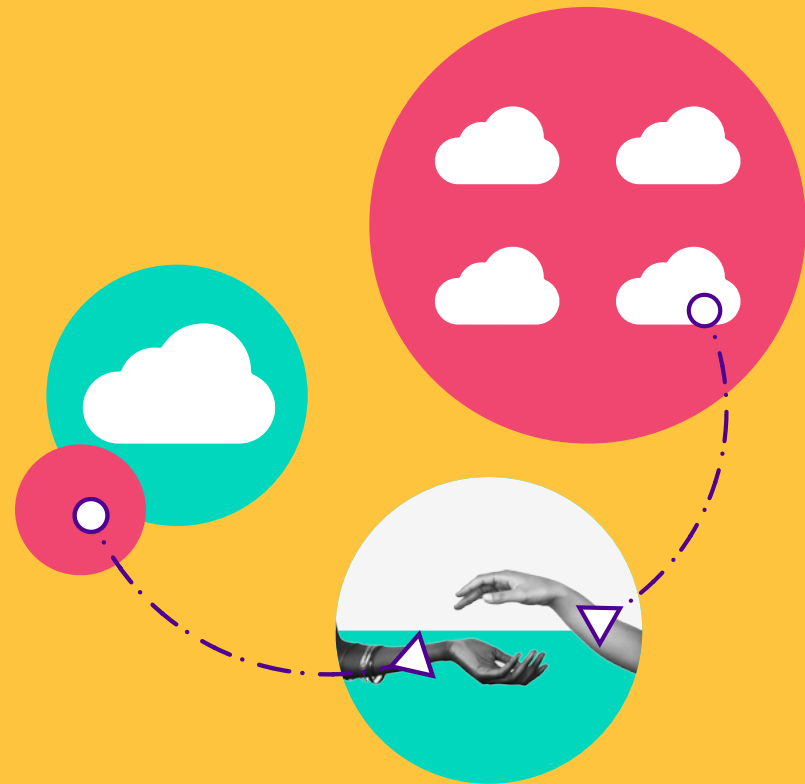
The networking challenge

Different networking solutions from different eras and different stages of corporate growth can add up to a mess; a complex ecosystem that is hard to manage and troubleshoot even with a large IT team. You can add to that the impact of changing patterns of work and the emergence of a new type of network edge, centred around the employee and the applications they rely on. Older centralised WAN arrangements can't handle this and visibility across the network is impossible.

Gone are the days when you had to simply protect your own data centre and the end-points that were attached to it. Now, everything is far more distributed and virtualised with IaaS and SaaS and native cloud applications to look after. Private networking has given way to internet networking, cloud, connectivity and security, and all need to be considered together as part of a coherent strategy.

Why SD WAN is the answer

SD WAN will resolve complexity as well as set you up to address both current market opportunities and future ones. With simplification comes the agility and visibility you need. With SD WAN you can support the best of all worlds and gain better visibility across your network, whether that's mature technologies like MPLS or as well as internet access for multiple public cloud platforms, all in one manageable place. SD WAN gives you back control, allowing you to configure single or multiple devices in real time. It means network services can be used, provisioned, and orchestrated in real time and on demand.

How Colt can help

With today's WAN challenges you need a partner who will take you on a journey. They need to understand your business if they're going to help you to transform it and get the most out of connectivity in a way that meets your objectives. SD WAN can benefit different organisations in different ways depending on their needs. Colt is the perfect trusted provider to help navigate a diverse ecosystem, able to talk independently about a whole range of access options and technologies that leverage our world-leading single fabric network. Our Innovation Workshops are designed to fully understand your requirements, your end user goals and your full IT stack – helping build a solution that is truly fit for purpose.

If SD WAN is the answer to any of these use cases, then why delay? Many of Colt's customers are already on their SD WAN journey or actively planning a move, but there are good reasons why some organisations are further behind. Some are simply waiting for the right moment: perhaps the end of existing connectivity contracts, or still sweating older assets. Plus SD WAN can look like a difficult jump into the unknown, with many different solution providers to choose from.

As a world-class service provider, Colt offers a different take on the SD WAN market than a manufacturer. We also understand your business: your challenges are our challenges. With 30 years of experience, we're investing not just in our network, but into the service and support that goes with it, to make sure that we can constantly exceed your expectations.

For more information
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